

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 6
By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Bill Monroe.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to honor the memory of a rare American musical genius and multi-talented musician, songwriter and performer who was truly unique; and

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that we learned of the death of Bill Monroe; and

WHEREAS, deservedly revered as the "Father of Bluegrass", Mr. Monroe was widely recognized as a musical innovator on a par with Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington; and

WHEREAS, as the founder of bluegrass music, Bill Monroe is the only person in history who created a genre of American music singlehandedly; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Monroe created a legacy all his own, a dignified and hard-to-master music that has maintained a rare degree of integrity as it has evolved through the decades; and

WHEREAS, Bill Monroe was not only bluegrass music's creator, he was also its most consummate master, as his recordings stand as the highest measure of the music's quality; and

WHEREAS, Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys spawned many stars and even more highly regarded masters of their instruments; the cast of musicians he influenced casts an even wider net: he has been characterized as the first rock n' roll artist because of the forceful rhythmic power and intricate musical progressions he introduced to string music; and

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WHEREAS, during his lifetime, Bill Monroe received a wide variety of honors, from election to the Country Music Hall of Fame to canonization in *Rolling Stone* magazine, he remains one of the most enigmatic and complex artists in the modern country music pantheon; and

WHEREAS, in 1929, Bill Monroe began his illustrious career, playing his trademark mandolin with his brothers Charlie and Birch on a Gary, Indiana radio station; and

WHEREAS, after Birch dropped out of the group, Charlie and Bill continued playing at radio stations throughout the South and Midwest as the Monroe Brothers; they recorded some 60 titles for the Victor Bluebird label from 1934-1938; and

WHEREAS, after their breakup in 1938, Bill Monroe formed several bands before finally crystallizing the lineup in Atlanta; he called his reorganized band “The Bluegrass Boys” in honor of his home state of Kentucky, thus naming the genre of music he created; and

WHEREAS, from the very beginning, Bill Monroe emphasized dignity and integrity in his music and his band; unlike other acts, he refused to pay up to the “rube” element of rural life; and

WHEREAS, much of the “Monroe sound” was in place by now: breathtaking tempos, a prominently featured fiddle and Bill Monroe's own piercing tenor dominant; and

WHEREAS, Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys successfully auditioned for the Grand Ole Opry in October 1939, and emerged as Opry favorites during World War II; he would continue to play Opry shows throughout his sterling career; and

WHEREAS, as the war years wound down, Mr. Monroe added new talent to the Bluegrass Boys; these revolutionary young players helped form what many have called “The World's Greatest Bluegrass Band”, and with them the popularity of his music escalated at an astonishing rate; and

WHEREAS, songs from this era joined *Mule Skinner Blues* as instant classics, especially such gems as *Blue Moon of Kentucky*, *Will You Be Loving Another Man*, and *I'm Going Back to*

Old Kentucky, on the charts, his best-selling numbers were *Kentucky Waltz* and *Footprints in the Snow*; and

WHEREAS, after experimenting with mainstream country, Bill Monroe returned to his roots to record numerous bluegrass classics in the 1950's, many of them autobiographical in nature; these songs included *My Little Georgia Rose*, *Letter From My Darling*, and the bluegrass standard, *Uncle Pen*, a tribute to his uncle and father figure Pendleton Vandiver, who is still remembered today in northwestern Kentucky as an exemplary fiddler; and

WHEREAS, he also charted with the classic instrumental *Scotland* in 1958 and *Gotta Travel On* in 1959; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, he played his first folk festival at the University of Chicago, expanding his influence to include an audience that was younger and not necessarily Southern; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Monroe created a great interest among students generally, and was soon busily connected with festivals solely devoted to bluegrass music; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, he established his own bluegrass festival at his farm in Bean Blossom, Indiana; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, he was the charter inductee into the Bluegrass Hall of Fame; he had been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1970 and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame a year later; and

WHEREAS, Bill Monroe received the 1988 Grammy Award for "Best Bluegrass Recording" for his album *Southern Flavor*; he was presented with the Grammy's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993; and

WHEREAS, as evidenced by the millions of people who love and revere his music and the high esteem in which he is held by the generations of musicians he influenced, men of Bill Monroe's stature do not often walk among us, and his numerous accomplishments should be appropriately commemorated; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby pause to honor the memory of Bill Monroe, reflecting fondly upon his indelible musical legacy as the "Father of Bluegrass Music" and his stature as the consummate master of the very genre of music he created.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we extend our sympathy and condolences to Mr. Monroe's family, friends and many admirers, knowing his passing creates a void that will not be easily filled.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.